

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following is a complete listing of the claims in this application, reflects all changes currently being made to the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and all earlier listings of the claims:

Claim 1. (currently amended): An image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses ~~image-forming apparatuses~~ via a network, said image reading apparatus comprising:

generation means for reading an image and generating an image signal ~~on the basis of reading the image~~;

selection means for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses ~~of image-forming apparatuses~~ for receipt of the generated image signal;

input instruction reception means for receiving an input instruction indicating whether or not the input of user management information is necessary from the selected external printing apparatus ~~of user management information from the selected image-forming apparatus~~;

~~determination means for determining whether or not the input of the user management information is necessary, in accordance with the received input instruction~~;

input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted in accordance with the instruction ~~result of the determination by said determination means~~;

output means for outputting the inputted user management information

to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image-forming apparatus~~;

reception means for receiving, from the selected external printing apparatus ~~image-forming apparatus~~, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined for using the selected image-forming apparatus based on the output of the user management information; and

transmission control means for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image-forming apparatus~~, in accordance with the availability information.

Claim 2. (previously presented): An image reading apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said transmission control means compresses the image signal prior to transmitting the image signal.

Claims 3 - 5. (canceled)

Claim 6. (currently amended): An image reading method for controlling an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses ~~image-forming apparatuses~~ via a network, said image reading method comprising the steps of:

reading an image and generating an image signal on the basis of reading the image;

selecting one from the plurality of external printing apparatuses ~~image-forming apparatuses~~ for receipt of the generated image signal;

receiving an input instruction indicating whether or not the input of user management information is necessary from the selected external printing apparatus of ~~user management information from the selected image forming apparatus;~~

~~determining whether or not the input of the user management information is necessary, in accordance with the received input instruction;~~

controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted in accordance with the instruction result of the determination in said determining step;

outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image forming apparatus;~~

receiving from the selected external printing apparatus ~~image forming apparatus~~, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined for using the selected image forming apparatus based on the output of the user management information; and

controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image forming apparatus~~, in accordance with the availability information.

Claim 7. (previously presented): An image reading method according to Claim 6, wherein said control step includes compressing the image signal prior to transmitting the image signal.

Claims 8 - 14. (canceled)

Claim 15. (currently amended): A computer readable memory storing a program executing an image reading method for controlling an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses ~~image-forming apparatuses~~ via a network, said program comprising:

code for reading an image and generating an image signal on the basis of reading the image;

code for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses of ~~image-forming apparatuses~~ for receipt of the generated image signal;

code for receiving an input instruction indicating whether or not the input of user management information is necessary from the selected external printing apparatuses of ~~user management information from the selected image-forming apparatus;~~

~~code for determining whether or not the input of the user management information is necessary, in accordance with the received input instruction;~~

code for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted in accordance with the instruction ~~result of the determination by said determination code;~~

code for outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image-forming apparatus;~~

code for receiving from the selected external printing apparatus ~~image apparatus~~, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined

for using the selected ~~image forming apparatus~~ based on the output of the user management information; and

code for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image forming apparatus~~, in accordance with the availability information.

Claim 16. (previously presented): A computer readable memory according to Claim 15, wherein said control code compresses the image signal prior to transmitting the image signal.

Claims 17 - 25. (canceled)

Claim 26. (currently amended): An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said selection means selects the ~~image forming~~ external printing apparatus according to the generated image signal.

Claim 27. (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the management information relating to a user includes at least one of a user ID, a division ID, or a title ID for the authentication determination at the selected ~~image forming~~ external printing apparatus.

Claim 28 - 33. (canceled)